

DCFS Weekly Update From the State Office

Monday, May 21, 2001

Wanna Trade?

By Richard Anderson

Boy, I'd only been official for about a week and already in trouble! Okay, how would you do this, if you were in this spot...? Let's say you were one of either the director or region administration, and you were told by the state legislature that you could possibly have a limited amount of discretionary funds, but only if you use these funds to resolve "hot spots" in the organization--that you absolutely cannot just give a blanket distribution to everyone. How would you go about making a decision like this?

Well, we went to our regional administrators and asked them what their "hottest" spots were. The worst turnover rate in the division as a whole has been in CPS--with a 50% turnover in staff, and more than a third of our CPS people have been with us less than a year! (Overall, division turnover has been about 16%.) Our regions felt we had to make our best efforts to try to change things in this area--to help retain trained and experienced staff in CPS positions. Also, the turnover rate for those with master's degrees has been 23%. This information supported the acquisition and use of these funds to try to help in these two problem areas. All divisions in state government had to make these kinds of choices. Then, the plan for the division was compared to all parts of the department to make sure it met the legislative intent, could be supported, and was equitable with the other divisions.

I promise you, these choices were not made easily or lightly! I'm so sorry if they don't feel fair to everyone (and I know that they don't). I know that each time someone gets an increase, some others feel slighted. I'm hoping, though, that we can stretch to see the bigger picture.

My experience is that when any part of the organization gets an increase, eventually it helps everyone, as future assessments bring up all the others to some higher level.

Even incentive awards, as pleasant as they seem, present difficulties. One of the overriding concerns in all the regions has been to have some way to give an incentive--especially to staff that have gone through the changes and stressful times of the division over the past five years. I hope you know that incentives are based largely on the length of time that people have been with us. In addition, the regions wanted to recognize everyone at some level and each region decided on a minimum for someone who has at least been with the agency for a certain amount of time. I know these choices were not easy for the regions, either, and I support the hard decisions that they have made in how to distribute these incentives, and I hope you will, too.

Please know that what you have given by way of good work and learning and using the Practice Model is greatly appreciated. Some years we haven't been able to offer any incentives at all (except what comes of the work itself). In fact, it is a pretty rare year where something in addition to the legislatively determined increases can be given. We know that every single person working for DCFS feels their job is the hardest (and it probably is). But each of you is vitally important in making this system work. I

hope you know how very much your regional administrators and I (and many others) value your efforts, and that, as you stay a positive force in the organization, there will be many good opportunities for rewards in the future.

Please know that we will never pass up any opportunity to reward you, even if we can only do it a few at a time. I hope to prove worthy of your confidence and continued support, as I try to do the best I can in this new (for me) director's job.